

The Meme Wars

Inside Info on the Russian Memetic Warfare Program that Took Over 4chan and the Global Right

By Aminom

Originally written in December of 2023

In 2001, following a passion for biology and evolutionary theory in college, I read the book “The selfish gene” by Richard Dawkins, which is where the now-ubiquitous word “meme” originated. While this word now refers to viral images and media on the internet in popular language, it originally referred to all culturally transmitted information, with the word “meme” being the “genes of culture.” The concept of meme inspired me as it implied that some of the same processes behind biological evolution are also at play in cultural evolution and human creativity. I read other books on memetics including “Virus of The Mind” by Richard Brody, “Media Virus” by Douglas Rushkoff, and “The Meme Machine” by Susan Blackmore, and researched writing about memetics on the early internet at the time. Over the next decade I occasionally followed memetic thought on the internet, and watched as the word “meme” itself evolved and became culturally ubiquitous.

One of the narratives that emerged from my first and most intense manic episode in 2010 was the idea that I was the personal target of a secret “memetic engineering program,” a program to augment cultural evolution by identifying and targeting potential catalysts of cultural change and guiding them towards what they needed using discrete means. This was a “reverse conspiracy theory” involving benevolent actors instead of malicious ones.

I also developed the idea of a “memetic singularity,” inspired by the concept of the technological singularity, which posits that the rate of technological change is increasing exponentially: as the capacity of technology has increased exponentially, and will inevitably reach a period in which the advancement of computer computers have increased enough to design even better computers (a chain reaction of recursive self-improvement,) resulting in an “intelligence explosion” that would change the world.

The idea of a memetic singularity in contrast is human-focused, positing that cultural and informational change has increased exponentially, and that the internet is serving as a hyper-accelerating of memetic evolution. The memetic singularity I envisioned would be an explosion of cultural (and therefore social) change and novelty, resulting in the rapid dismantlement and replacement of the antiquated hierarchical social systems and superstitions of the past, and a sort of virally transmitted mass enlightenment.

My speculation about the memetic singularity centered around 4chan, the infamous “toilet of the internet” because how I saw it functioning as a memetic ecosystem: on this website there is very quick turnover of threads and posts, resulting in a fierce competition for attention: only memes that are very “sticky” and “viral” can survive in such an environment. I also saw the lack of moderation, the anonymity, and the “asignificant” nature of the site as conducive to the free mutation of ideas.

On December 8, 2013 I posted this message to 4chan's /x/ paranormal forum:

The entire internet has served as a gigantic social computer and Anonymous is at the center of the internet universe. The free sharing and mutation of ideas with chaotic rules in key places on the internet. In the last few weeks there has been a convergence of new ideas right on 4chan which have quickly mutated into very odd forms (stories that span over multiple threads on /x/ that seem to fold over into themselves and reverse direction in time via narrative and interlock in seemingly impossible ways) as well as an awakening realization that some of the lowest people in society have contributed the most by being excessive data junkies and devoted time to the grand social computation even at the expense of their own social wellbeing. Oddly functional minds have contributed a great deal by forming and expressing odd relationships that may otherwise not be thought of that in turn, by sheer number and chance, may be applicable to other domains of knowledge. TL;DR "memes" are nontrivial, ask Wikipedia.

New ideas in philosophy and mathematics are now being spread and digested by the larger social matrix. Oh yeah by the way, one way to describe it is a memetic super-virus that was engineered to break the bonds of social slavery. The Cicada ARG's entire purpose was to bring the best minds to Anon, and they have all been infected by Virus 23. The similarities between Tila's tale and mine are a direct result of a memetic outbreak on the internet; we have hacked her to spread our memes en masse. There is no way to stop it, you shall be integrated, and now you have been infected by Virus 23 by reading this message. The memes are in you now. Culture has been hacked, all your base are belong to us. Embrace informational ego death. What you resist persists, create what you fear most. Enjoy speaking Lebanese.

Over the next few years I also speculated about the possible emergence of an opposite of a contagious “mass enlightenment”: a memetic pandemic, a movement of mutually reinforcing disinformation, delusion, cultishness, and division. I envisioned the cause of this movement as conservative cultural forces acting in desperation to preserve themselves in the face of accelerating cultural change, requiring increasingly extreme means to preserve and justify the status quo. This was partly inspired by my continued observation of discourse on 4chan, most especially its infamous political board /pol/, which was becoming increasingly far-right and conspiratorial.

On June 2, 2015 I published a video titled “Meme Wars: Memetic Entities” located at <https://vimeo.com/129669470> 14 days before Trump announced his presidential bid on June 18. This video is an artistic representation of “memetic entities,” which are cultural constructs such as gods, mythological figures, and fictional characters, created by splicing together media clips to create a surreal narrative. The video implies that there is a “conspiracy” of these “memetic entities” to subvert human agency to virally reproduce themselves at the expense of their hosts. These entities aren’t conscious in themselves in a sort of mystical way — instead they borrow the consciousness of their human hosts.

Over the next year and beyond I found my speculation about a memetic pandemic and memetic entities materialize in front of my eyes in the highest levels of social discourse with impossible levels of clarity. Far-right neo-Nazi extremists on 4chan’s “politically incorrect” board /pol/ massively mobilized around trying to elect Trump during the election, using the language of memetics, describing their efforts as “memetic warfare.” A major part of this movement was the Cult of Kek, featuring a bizarre narrative based on “memetic synchronicities” revolving around an ancient Egyptian god of chaos Kek. Additional information about this cult can be found by searching for “cult of Kek” or “Kek alt-right.” I was very interested in this cult as I watched it materialize on 4chan, and wrote the following about it on October 2, 2016:

Think of how ideas work socially. They spread to person to person, they replicate. They mutate and mate together. They experience memetic selection, they compete for mind share both in the mind of a person individually and the greater population. Ideas are organic, evolutionary, and viral. Transmitted through words and imagery. As an internet denizen and chan user this should be reflexive and obvious, as the internet has served to facilitate meme propagation to a higher degree, thus the “meme” meme itself (which means unit of cultural evolution) evolved to mean “internet meme,” retaining some of its original character but referencing phenomenon a bit more specific.

Memes are usually symbiotic or neutral regarding their hosts. They benefit them in some way — think of practical things like cooking recipes, or how to fix something. A hammer is a meme. They also serve valid social purposes, as in stories, art, and comedy. However some memes are not this way, some memes are viruses, parasites that use their hosts to reproduce themselves.

Meme magic is like how some black magic is. The black magician is through egomania, delusion, and power-lust — this state is called magusitis, or power-drunkenness. One gets the illusory belief of having power, which gives them a rush, a power high, which reinforces one to seek out examples of this power and its effectiveness to get further highs. The result is deepening delusion... as one gets further detached from reality, and captivated by the presumed source of the illusory power. They become “possessed.”

What is different about meme magic is that it’s very virality is explicitly stated to be a source of its power. Kek and his ability to infect... [is] worshiped as a holy anointment. It is a “meme” meme which has evolved to become parasitic itself, not by some malevolent mad memeticist but through thousands of generations of reproduction and selection on image boards and forums. What is more viral becomes reproduced more, and these successful memes breed together, combining traits, and eventually we get Kek.

Except Kek isn’t just merely a virus. It is a sleeve that fits over other memes, symbiotic with them, increasing their reproductive fitness and thus its own along with them. Kek is a super-parasite. This is evident in /pol/. Kek will meme Trump into the white house. Kek will alter the very fabric of sociopolitical reality in the way you want — or rather, in the way that the other mind-parasites that infest you want.”

/pol/ is a maelstrom [of such black magic,] filled with depression, anxiety, hatred, narcissism, and greed. The memes there play on these emotions, growing ever stronger and drawing in individuals who already have these weaknesses, whispering (metaphorically) that their weaknesses are virtue and driving them deeper into them. Infection takes place, spiritual/mental sickness, and all the /pol/ users bug-catch back and forth, infecting each other with a variety of ever more virulent strains. And Kek and meme magic is there, encouraging it all.

Inspired by the Cult of Kek and the increasing mass delusions and spread of disinformation among conservatives, I published this video on May 25, 2017 imaginatively illustrating an accelerating “memetic pandemic,” using clips from cola commercials to create a dream-like surreal narrative: <https://vimeo.com/218908974>

I was wrong about the Cult of Kek and meme warrior culture being merely the result of organic memetic evolution; I discovered evidence that Russia was behind its engineering when I read this July 15 2021 article describing the release of Kremlin papers which detailed Russia’s plot to put Trump into

the White House:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/15/kremlin-papers-appear-to-show-putins-plot-to-put-trump-in-white-house>

This is the key paragraph:

There are paragraphs on how Russia might insert “media viruses” into American public life, which could become self-sustaining and self-replicating. These would alter mass consciousness, especially in certain groups, it says.

"Media Virus" is a book written in 1994 by Douglas Rushkoff that greatly inspired the December 2013 post I made about "a super-virus that was engineered to break the bonds of social slavery." The relevant chapter from this book can be read here: <https://pastebin.com/4s91qRn6> Here are especially relevant paragraphs:

However esoteric and paranoid, this “substrain-virulent-2-23-93” mutation of the Virus 23 virus reveals the growing effort by computer users to exploit the viral media to conduct viral ideas. The more explicitly viral the conduit, the more specifically countercultural the memes. That is, the memes themselves are about the power of virology to effect social change.”

While too conceptual to be of any transformative value to the public at large, this idea goes to the heart of today’s viral efforts, and is certainly understood by those who consider themselves soldiers in the meme wars. Biological viruses are only successful when they are able to turn host cells into manufacturing plants for more viruses. The virus interpolates its genetic material into the DNA code of the cell, so that the cell will begin reproducing the virus. Eventually the cell divides or explodes, releasing many copies of the infected code. This is how a whole organism can become infected with a single virus, once the idea has returned millions of times. The strategy of these Internet viral manifestos is to use the iterative potential of the computer nets to spread memes about viruses housed within units that are themselves viruses. The Virus 23 strain even makes reference to chaos math and the predictions of some futurists that influenced observers that the world itself will reach a critical mathematical moment of “singularity” near the turn of the millennium. The virus writer exploits a chaotic device—the computer-generated media virus—to spread the conceptual and spiritual implications of chaos mathematics.”

The second paragraph mentions “meme wars” which was central to the meme warrior culture of the alt-right during the 2016 election. Moreover the text references chaos mysticism, and Kek is a god of destructive chaos. The “23” in Virus 23 references Discordianism, a “parody” religion that grew around libertarian counterculture in 1970’s revolving around Eris, the Greek goddess of chaos. Additional evidence that the cult of Kek is an intentional right-wing corruption of Discordianism, and was inspired by “Media Virus” is that it precisely conforms to Duginist philosophy, which was highly influential in Putin’s disinformation apparatus:

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2016/02/10/dugins-occult-fascism-and-the-hijacking-of-left-anti-imperialism-and-muslim-anti-salafism/>

Here a heretofore undiscussed facet of this development will be broached (a guiding feature informing the subtext of Duginism's 'beyond left and right' ideological catchall); and that is, the appropriation of a primarily western occultist framework (and specifically the worldview of Chaos magic) and its transformation by the Duginists into a strategy for political action in the service of the Fascist Internationale.

The success with the Cult of Kek was applied to the Qanon cult and disinformation campaign which began on October 28, 2017 with this post on 4chan's /pol/ forum:

Mockingbird
HRC detained, not arrested (yet).
Where is Huma? Follow Huma.
This has nothing to do w/ Russia (yet).
Why does Potus surround himself w/ generals?
What is military intelligence?
Why go around the 3 letter agencies?
What Supreme Court case allows for the use of MI v Congressional assembled and approved agencies?
Who has ultimate authority over our branches of military who approval conditions unless 90+ in wartime conditions?
What is the military code?
Where is AW being held? Why?
POTUS will not go on tv to address nation.
POTUS must isolate himself to prevent negative optics.
POTUS knew removing criminal rogue elements as a first step was essential to free and pass legislation.
Who has access to everything classified?
Do you believe HRC, Soros, Obama etc have more power than Trump? Fantasy.
Whoever controls the office of the Presidency controls this great land.
They never believed for a moment they (Democrats and Republicans) would lose control.
This is not a R v D battle.
Why did Soros donate all his money recently?
Why would he place all his funds in a RC?
Ref: <https://twitter.com/julianassange/status/925935097875968512>
Mockingbird 10.30.17
God bless fellow Patriots.

Qanon was/is a far-right conspiracy theory involving a purposed secret agent with "Q" level clearance in the federal government supposedly leaking information that Trump was secretly fighting a cabal of satanic child molesters including Hillary Clinton and other Democrats and liberals. I watched Qanon emerge from the very start on 4chan, and on March 2018 before Qanon began to massively spread and get public media attention I wrote the following about it:

Q Anon is weaponized questioning. Q will ask loaded, vague questions and then have thousands of poltards looking for anything that fits as an "answer." It's massively multiplayer cherry-picking. However this cherry-picking also creates a great deal of variation which makes the process powerful as a memetic system. These cherries are then posed as replies, and that which gets attention gets replicated into the next thread as part of the evolving Q narrative. Q then

reads this thread to figure out which questions are the best to ask next to inspire variation in the most promising places.

Try to understand the Q Anon phenomenon as a memetic system, and that would show you that it is the work of a mad memetic engineer who doesn't intend to find the truth but create a system of self-creating propaganda, a self-reinforcing collective delusion. A CULT.

Qanon was very successful in further radicalizing conservatives and grooming them into conspiratorial thought. Qanon has mostly died down because it was replaced by the web of lies woven by the Republican party in the ongoing effort to try to overthrow the 2020 election and COVID disinformation and conspiracy theories. There is now no distinction between the alt-right and "mainstream" American conservatism; the same memes, slang words such as "cuck," and talking points that originated on 4chan now are ubiquitous in online American conservative forums and discourse all over the internet.

There has been much discussion about the spread news of social media, and how it has empowered the Republican party, but it is 4chan that is truly the leader of conservative "policy" and propaganda. The anti-woke and anti-critical race theory propaganda has its roots in neo-Nazi "cultural Marxism" conspiracy theories that were popularized on 4chan. The current wave of transphobia and straight supremacy that began to emerge in 2020 can be traced to obsessive conservative incel hatemongering against "tr*n*nies" on 4chan. The problem isn't just in America: far-right extremism has seen a resurgence in Europe and other places around the world. If you want to know the future of the Republican party and global conservatism, visit 4chan's /pol/ forum.

How did 4chan get this way? As someone who has been deep into internet culture since 1997, I have a lot of personal experience. On the internet there are people called "trolls" who get enjoyment by aggravating other users either by verbally abusing them, saying inflammatory statements (such as racist statements) or by making absurd statements (the Flat Earth movement that has gotten popular in the last 8 years originated as a troll movement.) On 4chan I watched the worst trolls on the internet — who are empowered there because of the anonymity and lack of rules — troll other trolls into becoming the worst possible version of themselves they could possibly be, adopting and promoting the worst ideas and messages "for the lulz." There used to be at least some sense of self-awareness among such trolls, but now such self-awareness has vanished as these lifestyle trolls have justified their trolling so much that we have forgotten that it is an act.

On May 20 2018 I wrote this comment describing what I saw unfolding in American political reality:

Trump, Putin, Mercer, Bannon, Erik Prince, and a lot of the Republican party is part of a criminal mafia that is attempting to overthrow American democracy and install a Christian theocratic fascist state, and from there try to take over the world. Cambridge Analytica, Facebook, and a network of think-tanks are the engine behind this, attempting to use mass psychological warfare to achieve their goals.

After the 2020 election, this is exactly what happened: the Republican party attempted to overthrow American democracy by overturning the election. And as was revealed in August of this year, the Republicans planned to use force against US civilians to maintain their control, as in many similar coups:

In the first passage, it appears that when a deputy White House counsel warned Assistant

Attorney General Jeffrey Clark that if Trump remained in office despite the absence of any evidence of outcome-determinative election fraud, riots would break out in U.S. cities, Clark responded, 'That's why there's an Insurrection Act.' In the second, the indictment reports that when similarly warned of the risk of riots, Trump's outside counsel John Eastman responded that there were points in American history when violence was necessary to protect the republic.

From: <https://www.mediaite.com/news/my-blood-ran-cold-ex-trump-official-horrified-by-criminal-plot-to-have-military-turn-their-guns-on-civilians-to-facilitate-a-losing-candidate/#tbl-em-lntig2ym53u7s4kp5>

The U.S. is in a state of de-facto civil war, with the sides being the Republican party and everyone else who isn't a delusional fascist. The mainstream "liberal" media, and much of the Democratic party is also maintaining a convenient delusion by continuing to treat the situation like it is business as usual, denying the extremity of Republican crimes and insanity. The root cause goes as deep as the foundations of the modern Western world, in our socioeconomic system which rewards the greediest and most amoral, and has conditioned the masses to become obedient factory and office drones. The current memetic apocalypse was the inevitable result of demonizing education, skepticism, science, and knowledge.

10/13/2025 update: And of course Trump got elected and is hyper-accelerating the country into a civil war.

You'd best start believing in memepunk animes, you're in one.

<https://vimeo.com/specalblend>

<https://i.imgur.com/zVl2Jlk.jpeg>

<https://i.imgur.com/33FtaDa.png>

<https://i.imgur.com/u9Re4tV.jpeg>

<https://i.imgur.com/KAf5R48.jpeg>